

Nimuendajú: The Tukuna

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156 girl nine years old and her brother of seven were at the door of their house. The
 181 girl, amusing herself by killing minnows on the bank with a machete, cut herself
 578 lightly on the leg and started to wail. The boy, seeing the alarmed father approach-
 683 ing on the run, thought it best not to trust to the paternal judgment and, finding
 his escape blocked, threw himself into the water and fled by swimming, although
 he was entirely innocent. The father, seeing his blood-stained daughter and the
 fleeing boy, concluded without further reflection that the latter had wounded his
 sister. The boy was already out of reach, so the father seized a paddle weighing at
 least three kilograms and without hesitation hurled it after the fugitive. The
 missile struck the child's head, by the merest chance not killing him but opening
 up a wide gash in his scalp. The father, still infuriated, ignored the possible
 consequences, left the injured boy in the igapó, and returned to the house with
 the girl. Only at dusk the mother heard the boy's sobs in the jungle and went out
 to fetch him home.

156 An Indian of the Igarapé de São Jeronymo, Cazemiro nuu^{*kj}, flew into a temper
 578 at his wife one day, unjustly suspecting that she had been unfaithful. Terrified
 181 at her husband's rage, the woman fled into the jungle and could not bring herself
 684 to return, no matter how often and persistently he called her. Then Cazemiro in
 his fury set fire to the house and with his machete leveled all the fruit trees that
 he himself had planted about it. A little later he made his peace with the woman,
 but because their place had been destroyed, he and the woman were obliged to
 move in with her parents until he had shamefacedly rebuilt it. I know of still
 another instance of an Indian's destroying all his personal belongings with his
 own hands.

762 More tragic than these imbecilities are the suicides committed in rage. In 1941
 156 a woman, some thirty years old, who lived with her parents at Barreiras de Belém
 181 went to the riverbank in a mood of drunken melancholy. There she drank a little
 578 rum and bought another bottle, which she took to her mother. The latter replied
 that the daughter could keep the rum; she wanted none of it. With no further
 word the daughter proceeded to the neighboring garden clearing (roça), dis-
 solved fish drug (timbó) in a gourd of water, and drank it. Someone heard her
 faint cry, but since no one suspected what she was doing, no importance was
 attached to it, and it was not until later that the body of the suicide was found.

A week afterward, this same woman's nephew, called Beni, about twenty years
 old, also committed suicide in the same spot by drinking timbó. Before daybreak
 he had gone out to fish, returning about nine o'clock with a surubim, which he
 handed to his wife, a very young girl whom he had married just a short time
 before. Seeing that the little wife was not overeager to prepare the fish, he grew
 angry and finally struck her. His stepfather intervened, saying: "Well, and was
 it to have a woman to beat that you married?" This was enough to send Beni
 silently out of the house and into hiding, where he took the drug.

About the same time, another suicide occurred in Igarapé de Belém. A boy of
 sixteen returned with his relatives from a labor festival. He was not drunk, but
 when the canoe touched the bank, they noticed that he leaped ashore angry, for
 no perceptible reason. He ran up the slope above, entered the house, where he
 immediately mounted the platform (giráu), and flung himself under the mosquito

net. His mother and aunt, taking their burden baskets, went to fetch manioc roots, which they had put to soak; the uncle was bathing near by. Aside from the youth, there remained in the house only a little boy some seven years old. Suddenly the youth fell from the platform, which was about $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. above the ground, and for some time remained immobile on the floor. Then he said: "Why didst thou quarrel with me? Now I shall leave!" He arose and took to the jungle. The little boy followed him in bewilderment; but the youth, noticing him, left the trail and hid himself. A little later he returned to the house, staggering, fell upon a box, and there died of the poison he had taken. 762 156 181 578

There is one very serious motive for feuds and murder among the Tukuna: the suspicion that certain persons are using their magical powers to the detriment of others. Without exaggeration, this suspicion affects 10 per cent of the total population, with varying intensity; it is confirmed and accepted by some, denied by others. In the section on "Magic and Religion" I shall discuss this subject in more detail. 754

Drunkenness.—Drunkenness is the Tukuna's national vice and their only one. At their feasts, men, women, and children drink, and perhaps half the men and a tenth of the women and children become intoxicated. Many continue to dance even when drunk, beating a drum and singing without annoying anyone; but some become troublesome and offensive. Others, exclusively men, drink until they collapse into a hammock or in some corner, or even in the yard, where they vomit and sleep it off; still others grow quarrelsome, provoking more or less serious brawls that result in injuries or even deaths. 733

The small extent to which alcohol arouses the sexual instinct in Indians is notable; the youths drink, dance, and beat drums with their companions throughout the nights and days, apparently having no eyes for the girls, who in groups of two to five are doing the same thing. I have never seen Tukuna youths, whether drunk or sober, fighting over girls. 733 831

However, at these parties, in some corner of the house or yard there is invariably a group of men, already more or less senile, who humor themselves with obscene jokes, accompanied by hoots of laughter and illustrative gestures, though they never annoy the opposite sex with their nastiness. [522]

Industry.—One cannot tax the Tukuna with being "most indolent," as did Ribeiro de Sampaio; and the yarn about the Indian who lives with his family for a whole week on a bunch of bananas, passing the entire time sleeping or swinging in his hammock, appears quite different to a firsthand observer. 181 461 [114]

Except for those who are on the road to ruin because of their dependence upon civilized establishments, above all on rum stills, the Tukuna maintain a stable economy in their own lives. Many of them through their own efforts succeed in obtaining such material improvements as good firearms, iron tools, and sufficient clothing—even sewing machines.

Unmarried youths work least—when they do not hire themselves out to the Neobrazilians—but girls and married couples are hardly ever idle except after sundown. Usually, whenever I sought out a Tukuna, it happened that nobody was at home, or at most, only the children were. It was necessary to wait until afternoon when the owners returned to the house from their work. The reason that

825 catch it by means of a leaf and transfer the alime directly to the skin of the arm,
757 in order to produce vomiting, for example, after a drinking bout.

754 *Other witchcraft.*—Thorns, however, are not the only means by which the sorcerers destroy the objects of their malevolence. Some harbor a venomous snake in their body and send it against the enemy. Others sing to the spirit of the "shaman log" rotting on the riverbank, transforming it into a snake that will bite the enemy as he passes. Not all snake bites are caused by witchcraft, however; there are snakes that, without having any connection at all with shamans, bite anyone who passes. Again, sorcerers send the ghosts of ferocious animals against the persons whom they wish to eliminate, causing the victims to provoke bloody quarrels in which they are killed. Others, by a method I failed to learn, cause madness in their victims, who commit suicide. The suicides described earlier, and one not mentioned, [762] were all attributed to the malefactions of the celebrated warlock, U'iru, whose death I shall relate farther on.

An interesting observation concerning this madness caused by witchcraft was made to me by Calixto daueru'kj, himself a shaman of no mean reputation: "The sorcerer can injure only fools, against the wise he can do nothing." For this reason the Tukuna believe that their warlocks are powerless against civilized persons. Quirino, who died in 1932, swore that, among the Tukuna of Peruaté, Peru, he had been an eyewitness to an act of sorcery, which he described as follows. One day, while yet a boy, he followed an old man going into the jungle. There Quirino watched him weave the figure of a jaguar from uarumã, on which he placed a strip of tururí stretching from the tip of the muzzle to the tip of the tail. He had received this tururí, as well as the uarumã, from the underworld, na: 'pj (the habitation of the demons). He stretched the tururí until it covered the figure entirely, afterward painting it with black spots like those of a jaguar. Then he turned to the boy and said, "Do not be alarmed!" and tossed the figure on top of an anthill (cupim). Immediately it was transformed into a live jaguar, which ran off howling into the jungle. This jaguar killed people and brought their bodies to the old man, who ate them.

Quirino told his father what he had seen, and the news spread, coming to the attention of the civilized Peruvians, who ordered the old man arrested and burned. This story is interesting because it proves that warlocks maintain relations also with the demons of the underworld.

754 *Identification of a murdering sorcerer.*—When a person is considered to have
682 died as a result of witchcraft, his relatives do not always take the trouble to have
[781] the murdering sorcerer discovered. Sometimes, however, they call in a competent
shaman, who smokes beside the corpse, goes to sleep, and sees in a dream the soul
of the slayer coming to eat his victim. Formerly there were shamans who, after
obliging everyone else to leave the house, sang in sight of the cadaver, smoked, and
opened the earth invisibly by means of magic gestures with their hands. Through
this aperture they invoked the warlock's soul, and as soon as it appeared they
struck it down. The wounded soul immediately returned to the body of the sorcerer,
who died within the hour.

754 Nino evën'kj told me the following about the death of Marcellino, the famous
sorcerer and chief of the čara' clan, at which he was present in 1938. The soul

- 291 Men formerly wore a belt with one apron of turury inner bark in front and another behind. The penis was stuck under the belt. Women [174] perhaps at first went about entirely nude, but later adopted a short cloth of turury or of woven cotton, wrapped around the hips. Men wore 301 bracelets with long feathers and necklaces of teeth (pl. 65, bottom). At 292 least chiefs wore a cap of feathers mounted on a cotton or *Bromelia* net, or large diadema.

MANUFACTURES

- 532 **Bark cloth.**—Various masks and zoomorphic figures are made of bark 287 cloth (pl. 64).
- 285 **Basketry.**—Clothes baskets are made of uarumá stalks with a round opening closed with a lid. Four points are drawn up and down over the lid and the bottom, the latter serving as legs. Other baskets have a flat square lid and bottom. Both types of baskets are made in all sizes, from 2 to 16 inches (4 to 40 cm.) in diameter. Burdens are carried [492] in large conical baskets hexagonally woven of liana, or in cylindrical baskets of uarumá stalks. These are supported by an embira-fiber tump-line. The Tucuna also use pouches of looped tucum threads.
- 323 **Pottery.**—Women and sometimes men still make bowls, dishes, pans, 531 and pots of clay, which are decorated with painted or modeled ornaments. [776] Potter's clay is gathered according to certain rules so as not to anger its owner, a water demon who appears in the shape of the western rainbow.
- 415 **Gourds.**—Gourds are covered with a black lacquer, and may bear de- 531 signs in indelible red pigment. Wooden spoons are carved, sometimes in fantastic shapes.
- 411 **Weapons.**—The bow is 6½ feet (2 m.) long with the ends notched to hold the string. It is now rare, even as a fishing weapon. The hunting arrow has a poisoned wooden head and feathering of the arched type. Arrows are 5 feet 4 inches (1½ m.) long. Spears have three types of points: (1) a poisoned, wooden point with four corners; (2) an iron point; and (3) a plain pointed stick. The last two are still used to hunt jaguars and peccaries. The Tucuna blowgun is over 10 feet (3 m.) long, and the darts 1 foot (30 cm.) long. The poison [278] is the most effective of any made in the Amazon Basin, but its manu- [179] facture, which requires much time and care, is now being forgotten. [231] Hunting dogs, which are of little use, are, according to tradition, pre- [173] Columbian.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

- 181 The Tucuna are industrious and hard working, kind to their friends, honest, patient, and hospitable. But they are more liable than other Indians [762] to great outbursts of sudden anger, a trait which sometimes leads them to suicide. This is a manifestation of their individualism and desire to live